



◀ Northeast Neighborhood Partners received a \$1 million DECD loan to revitalize the former Swift Factory in Hartford. The city is pursuing a federal Promise Zone declaration for the neighborhood -- a program designed to clean up blighted areas -- that would help the nonprofit restore the property.

PHOTO | HBJ FILE

Reusing Properties

Connecticut's brownfield program picks up in 2015

By Tim Sullivan

Since Dannel P. Malloy became governor, the remediation and redevelopment of contaminated and abandoned properties — better known as brownfields — has become a centerpiece of the state's economic development agenda.



Since fiscal year 2012, Connecticut has invested more than \$110 million in redeveloping brownfields in every corner of the state, in big cities and small towns. It's not just the state who is investing — for every dollar invested by the state in these projects, non-state partners (primarily the private sector) have invested \$3.43. To put this in perspective, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's brownfield program is estimated to have invested a total of just \$190 million nationwide since the program's inception in 1995. In 2014 alone, the

Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development awarded more than \$35 million of funding to 55 new projects.

This year is already off to a fast start. In January, Malloy announced that \$2.2 million of grants had been awarded to eight historically significant brownfield sites throughout the state, allowing these structures to take crucial steps toward preservation and redevelopment. This spring, DECD will accept applications for a new round of grants, as well as continuing to accept loan applications.

We expect to see continued progress at priority project sites, such as the Contract Plating site in Stratford, where remediation work funded by a \$3 million state grant has begun at a former metals manufacturing facility, and at the Amerbelle Mill in Vernon, where a \$2 million state grant is helping bring hundreds of new jobs that will revitalize downtown Rockville.

In New Britain, demolition will begin on the former police station, opening up that site — located just across

the street from the CTfastrak station — for transit-oriented development. In Hartford, a leading nonprofit group will continue to stabilize and restore the Swift Factory — which once made the gold leaf that adorns the State Capitol — into a community-driven hub of food manufacturing, healthcare, and sustainable technology.

Absent this public investment, these sites would continue to languish as blights on their surrounding communities. Instead, these former eyesores are now being reimagined as new businesses, new homes, new open space, new cultural resources, and in some cases even new urban agricultural land. Brownfields are having second acts as economic engines. Every acre of brownfields that can be redeveloped is an acre of job-creating development that doesn't consume precious green space or farmland. Brownfields leverage existing infrastructure like sewers, water, energy, and transportation. Investing in brownfields pays multiple dividends.

Despite this historic commitment of state resources, the challenge facing the state remains daunting — there are thousands of contaminated legacy industrial sites throughout the state where redevelopment faces significant technical and financial challenges. So in 2015, DECD and our partner, the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) will continue to prioritize brownfield revitalization with a goal of returning the most promising of these sites to productive use as quickly and efficiently possible.

Connecticut's brownfields are a legacy challenge left behind by the past — but with concerted investment and focus, they can be converted from liabilities into assets that will fuel the state's future. 🌱

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